

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 250939Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4388

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: AMGT, BG
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE USE OF PCVS IN BANGLADESH

REF: DACCA 0425

1. IN COURSE OF MEETING APRIL 20 WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN, THE QUESTION OF POSSIBLE USE OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS IN BANGLADESH WAS RAISED. (THIS HAS BEEN DISCUSSED BY U.S. OFFICIALS WITH AMBASSADOR SIDDIQI IN WASHINGTON.) AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT WE WERE NOT NECESSARILY WEDDED TO IDEA OF WORKING WITH BANGLADESH VOLUNTEER SERVICES (REFTEL) OR WITH ANY OTHER SPECIFIC PRIVATE VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION; IF BANGLADESH WANTED VOLUNTEERS THEY WOULD BE INTRODUCED IN ACCORDANCE WITH BDG WISHES TO WORK WITH PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS OR GOVERNMENTAL BODIES. AMBASSADOR SAID IF THE BDG WAS INTERESTED IN SOMETHING ALONG THESE LINES, IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR A PEACE CORPS REPRESENTATIVE, WHO MIGHT BE TRAVELING IN THE AREA, TO STOP IN DACCA FOR INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS.

2. FOREIGN SECRETARY'S RESPONSE WAS CAUTIOUS. HE ASKED FOR LETTER FROM AMBASSADOR SETTING FORTH TWO POINTS: NAMES OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN THIS AREA WHERE PCVS ARE TO WORK AND AN ASSURANCE OF OUR FLEXIBILITY WITH RESPECT TO THE ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH PCVS HERE MIGHT WORK (DRAFT
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AT PARA 5). HE WOULD USE THIS AS A MEANS OF ASCERTAINING-
THE BDG'S OFFICIAL ATTITUDE.

3. FOREIGN SECRETARY DID, HOWEVER, GO ON TO EXPRESS SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT PCVS WORKING WITH PRIVATE VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS IN BANGLADESH, ALONG LINES NOTED EARLIER BY RELIEF SECRETARY KHASHRU WITH AID OFFICIALS HERE. HE ALSO NOTED

THAT ANY FUTURE PROGRAM SHOULD BE MODEST AND LOW KEY AS THERE WERE STILL POLITICAL AND OTHER ELEMENTS "HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS" ABOUT AND PROBABLY OPPOSED TO ANY SUCH U.S. ACTIVITY. FOR THIS REASON, HE FELT THERE SHOULD DEFINITELY NOT BE A SEPARATE PC OFFICE BUT A FEW VOLUNTEERS MIGHT BE INTRODUCED SOMEWHAT ALONG LINES OF VOLUNTEERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES ALREADY HERE. HE NOTED ALSO (AS DID THE RELIEF SECRETARY) THAT THE WHOLE MATTER OF PVOS AND VOLUNTEERS IS UNDER STUDY BY THE BDG, AND NEW GROUND RULES WILL BE ESTABLISHED. HE WOULD EXPECT NO DECISION UNTIL THIS STUDY WAS COMPLETED.

4. COMMENT: THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT A PROPOSAL INVOLVING PCVS DOES NOT COMMIT HIM TO SUPPORT SUCH A PROPOSAL. WE ANTICIPATE, HOWEVER, THAT HIS LETTER COULD LEAD TO AGREEMENT TO RECEIVE A PC/W REPRESENTATIVE FOR EXPLORATORY TALKS. FOLLOWING THESE TALKS WE WOULD HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF JUST WHERE WE AND THE BDG STAND.

5. PROPOSED LETTER TO BD FOREIGN SECRETARY:

"DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

FURTHER TO OUR CONVERSATION ON APRIL 20 ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSIGNING TO BANGLADESH A FEW PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS, I WISH TO ASSURE YOU THAT WE WOULD BE QUITE FLEXIBLE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH SUCH VOLUNTEERS MIGHT WORK. THEY COULD BE ASSIGNED TO BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT ENTITIES OR, WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONCURRENCE, TO PRIVATE VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS.

YOU ASKED ABOUT OTHER COUNTRIES IN THIS REGION IN WHICH PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS ARE SERVING. SUCH VOLUNTEERS ARE NOW WORKING IN AFGHANISTAN, NEPAL, MALAYSIA, AND THAILAND.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT IT WOULD BE EASY TO ARRANGE FOR AN INFORMAL VISIT TO BANGLADESH BY A KNOWLEDGEABLE PEACE CORPS OFFICIAL, EITHER FROM WASHINGTON OR A NEARBY COUNTRY, SHOULD YOUR GOVERNMENT WISH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION."

6 PLEASE ADVISE. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO KNOW WHETHER PCVS HAVE BEEN USED IN MULTI-NATIONAL PROGRAMS; SEVERAL OTHER COUNTRIES DO HAVE VOLUNTEERS HERE WORKING DIRECTLY WITH BD MINISTRIES OR AS PART OF MULTI-NATIONAL ACTIVITIES.
MASTERS

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